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**BACK TO THE FUTURE: DOES HISTORY SUPPORT THE
EXPEDITIONARY AIR FORCE CONCEPT?**

by

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Preface

History often provides the best classroom for studying the outcome of future events. My initial intent for this research paper was to learn as much about the EAF as possible, while analyzing the unique challenges facing it. However, I found that many of these challenges have already been addressed by previous researchers, and were being resolved by a mass of people, conferences, committees, etc. at higher levels who are far more qualified to do so than I. Therefore, I changed tack and decided to look at historical examples of airpower used in an expeditionary role, the problems faced in these examples, and whether or not my airpower ancestors were successful in meeting these challenges. By-and-large, I found they were successful in overcoming the challenges, in each case adding to the rich heritage of American airpower by overcoming obstacles to reach ultimate success. I think that the EAF will be another chapter this ongoing success story.

I would like to thank my advisor, Major Tom “Grinner” Nine, whose patience and guidance I have greatly appreciated, especially as I struggled with defining my topic. He pointed me down the path of doing a historical study, which I thoroughly enjoyed, and always met me with his patent grin. Also, I would like to thank my family for permitting me the time to work on this project, in particular my wife, Kim. Her encouragement in this endeavor, as with everything I undertake, is my inspiration.

Abstract

On January 1, 2000, the USAF began on a new journey—the Expeditionary Air Force. This concept involves the deployment of integrated fighter, bomber, and support aircraft and personnel on a rotational basis to meet the operational needs of the warfighting Commanders-in-Chief. The purpose of this research paper is to study historical use of land-based airpower to determine whether or not history supports the modern-day Expeditionary Air Force concept. It does not review the use of naval airpower. A general understanding of the modern EAF is provided as a benchmark for analysis. Following this foundational discussion is a look at the historical use of airpower as an expeditionary force, and some of the problems encountered with its employment along the way. Many parallels exist between the issues and challenges facing today's EAF and those that faced expeditionary air forces in the past. After a general discussion of the historical use of expeditionary airpower, attention is drawn to the Composite Air Strike Force (CASF), a little known USAF entity that existed from 1955 – 1973. The CASF was very similar in organization and concept to the EAF, but was developed to meet the threat of small-scale “hot” wars in a Cold War environment. The differences between the security environments for the CASF and EAF are examined, followed by a comparison of these two entities, to include the relative advantages of one over the other. Based on this analysis, the conclusion is drawn that history does indeed support the modern-day concept of an Expeditionary Air Force. In fact, the assertion is made that

history not only proves the validity of the current EAF concept, but that it is also replete with examples of the expeditionary use of airpower from the earliest days of flight, and that the EAF will succeed based on this precedent.

Part 1

Introduction

There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.

— Machiavelli

On January 1, 2000, the USAF began on a new journey—the Expeditionary Air Force (EAF). This concept involves the deployment of integrated fighter, bomber, and support aircraft and personnel on a rotational basis to meet the operational needs of the warfighting Commanders-in-Chief (CINCs). This restructuring initiative for the Air Force came as a result of a shift in Cold War mentality to post Cold War reality—our operational air force was stretched thin. It was more forward deployed, with fewer resources, people, and permanent overseas bases than ever before.¹ The EAF has been heralded as the solution to that problem—a new idea created to relieve Operations Tempo (Ops Tempo) and Personnel Tempo (Pers Tempo) without degrading the CINCs' warfighting capabilities. But is the concept of using the air force as an expeditionary force, composed of integrated fighter, bomber, and support aircraft, actually a new one? Or was it merely borrowed from past deployments of airpower as an expeditionary force? If the latter is the case, does history support the use of airpower in an expeditionary fashion?

The purpose of this paper is to study the historical use of land-based airpower to determine whether or not history supports the modern-day EAF concept. It does not review the use of naval airpower. Before the historical use of expeditionary airpower can be discussed, however, it is important to have a general understanding of the modern EAF as a benchmark from which to base this analysis. Following this foundational discussion is a look at the historical use of airpower as an expeditionary force, and some of the problems encountered with its employment along the way. Many parallels exist between the issues and challenges facing today's EAF and those that faced expeditionary air forces in the past. After a general discussion of the historical use of airpower, attention will be drawn to the Composite Air Strike Force (CASF), a little known USAF entity that existed from 1955 – 1973. The CASF was very similar in organization and concept to the EAF, but was developed to meet the threat of small-scale “hot” wars in a Cold War environment. The differences between the security environments for the CASF and EAF will be examined, followed by a comparison of these two entities, to include the relative advantages of one over the other. Based on this analysis, the conclusion is drawn that history does indeed support the modern-day concept of an Expeditionary Air Force. In fact, the assertion is made that history not only proves the validity of the current EAF concept, but that it is also replete with examples of the expeditionary use of airpower from the earliest days of flight, and that the EAF will succeed based on this precedent.

The defining term in EAF is the word expeditionary. It is important to have a common definition of the term “expeditionary” before undertaking an analysis of the current and historical uses of expeditionary airpower. The American Heritage Dictionary

defines expeditionary as “relating to or constituting an expedition, especially military.”²

Likewise, the definition of the word expedition is given as:

Expedition – 1.a. A journey undertaken by an organized group of people with a definitive objective. **b.** A long march or voyage made by military forces to a scene of battle. **2.** The force sent out, with its retinue, conveyances, and equipment. **3.** Speed in performance; dispatch; promptness.³

The root word for both expeditionary and expedition is expedite. It is defined as follows:

“Expedite – 1. To speed up the progress of; help along; assist; facilitate. **2.** To perform quickly and efficiently.”⁴

Summarizing these definitions, an operation must meet a certain set of criteria before it can be considered expeditionary. These criteria are: 1) an expedition is essentially an organized group undertaking a journey, which implies traveling a measured distance from home station, 2) the group has a common, definitive objective, 3) a military expedition is undertaken to bring forces to bear in battle, to prevent a battle or, in modern times, to respond to another crisis, 4) an expedition includes the logistics, mobility, and the equipment necessary to operate, and 5) an expedition is an exercise of speed and efficiency. All operations discussed herein will be measured against these criteria.

Notes

¹ Peters, F. Whitten and Michael E. Ryan, DoD Press Briefing. “Air Expeditionary Forces,” 4 Aug 98.

² The American Heritage Dictionary, New College Edition, Houghton & Mifflin, 1983, pg. 462.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Part 2

The EAF Concept

Being an expeditionary aerospace force means having a force that is fully capable of utilizing the unique aspects of air and space power—range, speed, flexibility and precision—to their fullest capacity. We must be able to use air and space power, not where we live, but where we are needed. Not when we can, but when we must.

— General Michael Ryan, USAF Chief of Staff

In order to compare the historical use of expeditionary airpower to the modern-day EAF concept, it is critical to have an understanding of this “new” concept, beginning with its origin. It is said that “necessity is the mother of invention,” and the modern-day EAF is no exception to this rule. In October 1995, the Central Command (CENTCOM) CINC found himself facing a dilemma. Despite the end of the Gulf War in February 1991, the United States had been forced to maintain a constant presence in Southwest Asia to curtail the activities of Saddam Hussein. The bulk of this effort entailed the enforcement of the no-fly zones over Northern and Southern Iraq using USAF and United States Navy (USN) aircraft. While there had been constant carrier presence in the Arabian Gulf following the war and up until this time, the Navy scheduled the *USS Independence* Carrier Battle Group for withdrawal from CENTCOM duty without an in-theater replacement for a period of six weeks. This was unacceptable to the National Command Authorities (NCA) and the Department of Defense (DoD).¹

Enter into this picture Lt Gen John Jumper, who moved from the post of Special Assistant to the Air Force Chief of Staff for Roles and Missions, to the dual-hatted role of Commander, Nineteenth Air Force and head of Central Command Air Forces (CENTAF) in October 1994. During this time he had been working on a proposition for the employment of USAF airpower that would fill the gap in carrier presence in the Arabian Gulf. He briefed the plan to the CINC, who accepted it, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) directed the deployment of forces from Air Combat Command (ACC) to Bahrain NLT 19 October 1995 for not more than 120 days duration.² This action, and the planning that preceded it, would chart the course for the future of the USAF—the EAF.

What is the EAF?

According to Air Force Instruction (AFI) 10-400, *Aerospace Expeditionary Force Planning*, “The EAF concept is how the Air Force will organize, train, equip, deploy and sustain itself by creating a mindset and cultural state that embraces the unique characteristics of aerospace power—range, speed, flexibility, precision—to meet the national security challenges of the 21st Century. The concept has two fundamental principles: first, to provide trained and ready aerospace forces for national defense and second, to meet national commitments through a structured approach which enhances Total Force readiness and sustainment.”³ The Air Force Link website adds, “under this concept, the Air Force will provide rapidly responsive, tailored-to-need aerospace force capability, prepared and ready to conduct military operations across the full spectrum of military operations.”⁴

These two statements speak volumes about the EAF concept. While one of the driving forces behind the EAF is to reduce USAF Ops Tempo and Pers Tempo, these definitions clearly indicate that the EAF is much more revolutionary than a mere scheduling scheme. It affects every aspect of Air Force life—the way we organize, train, equip, and deploy—and involves a change in the basic mindset and culture of the force. It blends the unique qualities of aerospace power—range, speed, flexibility, and precision—presenting them in a synergistic, readily available package. The EAF also incorporates the Air National Guard and Reserves into the planning for contingencies, capitalizing on the Total Force Concept. The EAF concept allows tailoring of packages to meet the specific needs of the contingency at hand, up to and including Major Theater Wars.

The definition also states why the EAF concept was developed—to meet the security challenges of the 21st Century. While the USAF had already adapted to meet some of the challenges presented by the changing world environment, it was doing so under the structure and organization designed to meet the threat of the Cold War. The EAF was created to institutionalize many of the new processes within the USAF, to do them smarter and more efficiently, and to reorganize the Air Force to meet these new challenges. The end of the Cold War left the Air Force and her sister services struggling to find a reason for existence. The Gulf War in 1991 in many ways was a bridge from the past to the future. It was a large-scale conventional war pitted between a well-armed aggressor, Iraq, and a coalition partnership led by the United States. Since then, there have been no large-scale international wars, but there have been multiple coalition small-scale contingency operations. In fact, many noted historians have argued that the end of

the Cold War and the Gulf War may have signaled the end of conventional warfare.⁵ On the other hand, while the need for conventional forces seemed to be reducing, the need for airpower was actually on the rise. Of the Gulf War, one noted source states; “America’s reliance on air power has set the American way of war apart from all others for well over half a century.... Air power seems the distinctively American form of military intimidation.”⁶ The Gulf War was a showcase for this “American way of war.”

The aftermath of the Gulf War and the lack of a symmetrical threat found the doves in Congress seeking a peace dividend, the proverbial “beating your spears into plowshares.” As part of this peace dividend, the USAF reduced its overseas presence from 51 to 16 bases.⁷ Many of these were forward bases in the European Theater, which were robustly supported during the Cold War. During this time, however, the Ops Tempo and Pers Tempo began increasing due to small-scale contingencies, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian operations, etc. Further complicating this was a reduction in personnel via voluntary and non-voluntary reduction-in-force programs. In fact, USAF personnel have been reduced by one-third and have been deployed four times as much as their Cold War counterparts—on a typical day, 14,000 Air Force personnel are deployed around the world, with 8,500 in Southwest Asia alone.⁸ This left the USAF facing a dilemma—while there was no longer a symmetric threat that could match it, the Air Force and its people were engaged more globally than ever before putting out these brushfires. Complicating the problem was that the USAF was still organized to meet the threat of a symmetrical foe in a Major Theater War (MTW). While this was appropriate for the Cold War, it was clear that the Air Force had to change before it sacrificed its

people to the New World Order prophesied by former President George Bush. It was in this environment that the concept of the EAF was born.

How Does the EAF Work?

It is important not only to understand the origin of the EAF, but also how it will answer the challenges of the new world environment in which it was created. AFI 10-400, *Aerospace Expeditionary Force Planning*, details the EAF concept of operations. It calls for the organization of the majority of the Total Force into 10 Air Expeditionary Forces (AEFs), two dedicated on-call Air Expeditionary Wings (AEWs), 5 Lead Mobility Wings (LMWs), required Air Operations Centers (AOC), and Air Force Forces (AFFOR) Command and Control (C2) elements.⁹ The AEFs and the on-call AEWs represent a wide array of composite combat capabilities, and are deployed as Aerospace Expeditionary Task Forces (ASETFs) that can perform one or more of the USAF basic functions.¹⁰ These functions are: Counterair, Counterspace, Counterland, Countersea, Strategic Attack, Counterinformation, Command & Control, Airlift, Air Refueling, Aeromedical Evacuation, Spacelift, Special Operations Employment, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance, Combat Search and Rescue, Navigation & Positioning, and Weather Services.¹¹ ASETF packages are tailored to meet a specific contingency, and fall under the combatant command and operational control of a theater commander. The LMWs provide trained leadership to support short-notice humanitarian relief operations (HUMROs) and noncombatant evacuation operations (NEOs). In addition to the above, the EAF will provide strategic “enablers” or common user assets, such as space forces, as they are needed. Additionally, the USAF Low Density/High Demand

(LD/HD) assets, including U-2, E-8 JSTARS, E-3 AWACS, RC-135 RIVET JOINT, Special Operations Forces, and Combat Search and Rescue will support EAF operations subject to the Global Military Force Policy (GMFP).¹²

Each AEF will operate on a 15-month, four-month cycle as shown in Figure 1, similar to the 18-month rotational cycle used today by the U.S. Navy's carrier battle groups. In Phase I, the AEFs will conduct normal training and exercises for approximately 10 months, focusing on unit missions and basic proficiency, while also taking care of routine issues such as leave, family needs, medical/dental appointments, etc. In Phase II, intensive training takes place for approximately 2 months, focusing unit activities on the area of responsibility (AOR) if it is known, and the actual spin-up for deployment. In Phase III, two AEFs are placed on-call or deployed for a 90-day period, with support from one of the on-call AEWs if necessary. Finally, in Phase IV, the AEFs will recover to the Continental United States (CONUS) to separate home bases for reconstitution. At the completion of Phase IV, the two AEFs again enter Phase I and the process begins again. Two AEFs will be on call for every 90-day period. The two on-call AEWs will rotate on a 90-day on/90-day off schedule and will augment the deployed ASETFs if necessary for surge operations. Eventually these two AEWs will be absorbed into the ten standing AEFs.¹³

The USAF will meet the day-to-day, steady state and deployed operational commitments with forces assigned to the two scheduled AEFs, one on-call AEW, the enabler forces, and those LD/HD assets as necessary. These commitments may cover the entire spectrum of conflict, up to and including Major Theater Wars. Surge operations occur when the contingency escalates past the capabilities of the deployed AEFs and on-

call AEWs. At this trigger point, other AEFs may be deployed, other air forces disengaged and re-deployed, Reserve components called-up, or STOP-LOSS actions taken on the active force. However, cases of significant surge will require consideration for extra reconstitution and reduced commitment levels.¹⁴

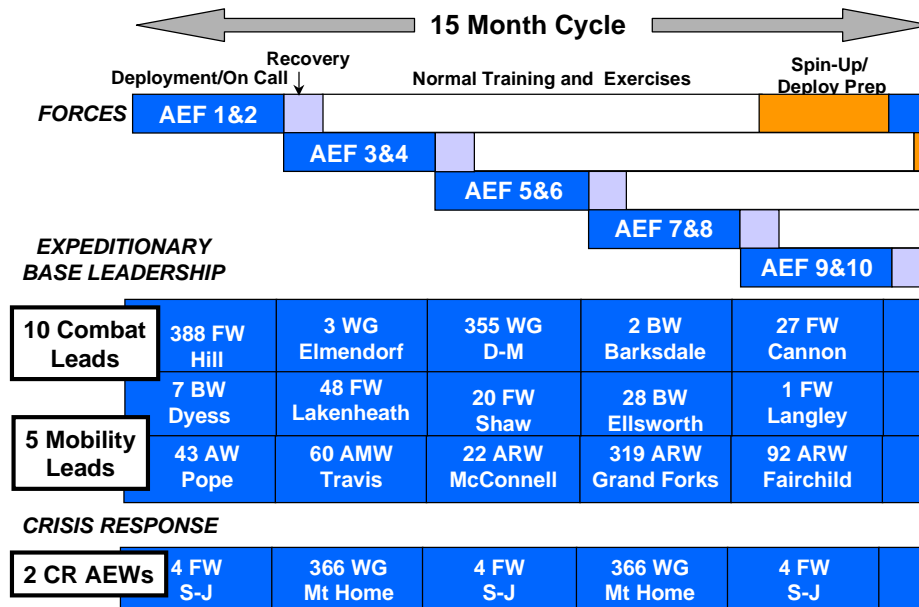


Figure 1 – EAF Rotational Cycle with Lead Combat Wings, Mobility Wings, and On-Call AEWs. Source: EAF Master Briefing, HQ USAF/XOP, 14 Mar 00.

The motto of the EAF is “Light, Lean, & Lethal.”¹⁵ A critical part of the EAF concept is reducing the footprint of forces in-theater via “reach back” to warfighting capabilities in rear areas. This includes locating many of the traditional functions of the deployed Air Operations Center at the Rear Operations Support Center at Langley AFB, Virginia.¹⁶ According to Gen. Michael Ryan, USAF Chief of Staff, “We believe we can cut the size of our air operations center by an order of magnitude—to do with 200 what we used to do with 2,000.”¹⁷

As can be seen from the above discussion, the EAF will not only provide an Air Force ready to meet its operational commitments, but will also provide USAF personnel a certain amount of stability in their schedule. For instance, an individual can review the schedule for his assigned AEF and determine when they can take leave, plan for personal events such as weddings, schedule college courses, etc. Likewise, that individual would be well aware of the 90-day window in which he or she would be eligible for deployment, and would not make plans during that timeframe. In another example, a single parent would be able to arrange for childcare for their dependents in the window of eligibility should he or she be deployed. On the surface, the EAF appears to be a “win-win” situation for both the USAF and the individual.

Applying the criteria established in the first chapter, the modern-day EAF concept is, by its nature, expeditionary. It is an organized group of people undertaking a journey with a common objective to bring its forces to bear in battle or to prevent a battle or other crisis. The EAF comes complete with the necessary support and capabilities to achieve the mission, whether through its deployed presence or through reach back capability. Deployment of an ASETF is an exercise of speed and efficiency. But what does history have to say about the success of expeditionary deployments of airpower in the past? The following chapter offers a discussion on this issue.

Notes

¹ Davis, Richard G. *Immediate Reach, Immediate Power: The Air Expeditionary Force and American Power Projection in the Post Cold War Era*. Air Force History and Museums Program, Washington, 1998, pg 23.

² Ibid, pg 24.

³ Air Force Instruction (AFI) 10-400, *Aerospace Expeditionary Force Planning*, October 1999, pg. 2.

⁴ Air Force Website. On-line. Internet. Available at <http://www.af.mil/eaf>.

Notes

⁵ Pfaltzgraff, Robert L., Jr., "The United States as an Aerospace Power in the Emerging Security Environment," In *The Future of Air Power in the Aftermath of the Gulf War*, Edited by Richard H. Schultz, Jr. et. al., Maxwell AFB, AL, July 1992, pg 40.

⁶ Keaney, Thomas A. and Eliot A. Cohen, *Revolution in Warfare? Air Power in the Persian Gulf*, Annapolis, MD, Naval Institute Press, 1995, pg. 222.

⁷ Goodman, Glenn W., "An Expeditionary Aerospace Force," *Armed Forces Journal International*, August 1998, pg. 19.

⁸ Briefing. Subject: EAF Master Briefing. On-line. Internet.
Available at <http://www.xo.hq.af.mil/xop>. 14 Mar 00.

⁹ AFI 10-400, pg. 2.

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 4-5.

¹¹ Air Force Doctrine Document 1 (AFDD 1), "Air Force Basic Doctrine," September 1997, pg. 45.

¹² AFI 10-400, pg. 2.

¹³ Ibid, pg. 4.

¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 3-4.

¹⁵ AEF Battlelab Brochure, pg 1.

¹⁶ Ryan, Michael E., "Expeditionary Aerospace Force for America," Keynote address to the National Air Force Association Convention, Washington, D.C., 14 Sep 98.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Part 3

Historical Use of Expeditionary Air Forces

I have heard the lament that, “the Air Force is not what it used to be during the Cold War,” and I must tell you that it is absolutely true; this “ain’t” our fathers’ Air Force. As the world around us changes, so must all the services, including the Air Force.

— General Michael E. Ryan

“The more things change, the more they stay the same,” or so the old adage goes. While the EAF may appear to be a new concept for the USAF, it is actually rooted in a rich tradition of providing expeditionary airpower when and where it is needed to safeguard national interests.¹ Even so, American airpower has not always been as responsive in meeting these needs as it should have been. The following is a discussion of how the U.S. has used airpower in an expeditionary role through major conflicts, beginning with its earliest use and tracing through to the 1991 Gulf War. Along the way, American airpower has faced many challenges, some of which will be discussed here. Particular attention will be paid to the Composite Air Strike Force (CASF), a Cold War predecessor to the modern day EAF. The similarities of the CSAF and EAF, along with the relative advantages of one organization over the other, will be analyzed in a subsequent chapter.

Early Uses of Expeditionary Airpower

The earliest uses of expeditionary American airpower found the United States woefully unprepared. The first such use came in 1916, as Brigadier General John J. Pershing used aircraft for reconnaissance during his punitive expedition against the outlaw leader Pancho Villa in Mexico. This first venture highlighted some of the difficulties concerning the use of airpower away from home stations facing the USAF today—the fragility of aircraft operating at a distance from major maintenance facilities and the necessity of proper equipment for aircraft ground support elements.² In fact, during OPERATION ALLIED FORCE over Kosovo in 1999, four ad-hoc regional aircraft maintenance facilities had to be constructed in Europe to repair aircraft operating in that theater.³ These types of problems, which were the first to plague the expeditionary use of airpower, continue to do so in the present and will continue to do so in the future. As in Mexico in 1916 and in Kosovo in 1999, these problems can be solved.

World War I was another laboratory for the expeditionary use of airpower. The concept of an American Expeditionary Force is rooted in World War I, the first war in which airpower was used in virtually all of its modern day roles—counterair, countersea, interdiction, close air support, reconnaissance, etc. While the U.S. entered WWI on April 17, 1917, it was not until September 1918 that U.S. airpower would have a significant impact on the war, and only then in the form of American pilots flying British and French aircraft.⁴ This lack of preparedness was encapsulated in the foreword of the book, *Air Service, American Expeditionary Force 1918*, written by an American aviator and logistician from that war. In it, he states:

The primary purpose of this book is to demonstrate the necessity of a preparedness program for our air force. The secondary purpose is to give credit, while sources of information are still available, to officers and men of our own and Allied forces for creating an American Air Service *despite our lack of preparedness in 1917*, and despite the relatively little assistance that part of this country charged with this duty rendered to our Air Service in France in time to be of any use. *This must not happen again!*⁵ (Note: Emphasis added)

The modern day EAF is the realization of the wishes of this early airpower pioneer for an American combat air force prepared to go wherever it is needed at a moment's notice.

In addition to being unprepared, the American Air Service in France in 1918 first encountered many of the same problems facing today's EAF. Their difficulties, as are many of our modern difficulties, were due to geographical and logistical complications.

For instance, the same author states,

... a clear conception (of the problem) is necessary to any comprehension of the conditions that existed and the problem of organization. These outstanding factors must be remembered:

First – we operated three thousand miles from base (referring to the U.S.)

Second – Our transportation by water was largely in foreign bottoms, and our transportation on land was almost entirely on foreign railroads controlled by men who in great proportion did not speak our language.

Third – Our communication means by cable and telegraphs were largely dependent on foreign controlled wires.

Fourth – We had to create our own postal and telegraph system and part of our own railway system.⁶

Superimposing these problems onto the modern EAF, you find that they are very similar to the situations faced today only in different form. The problem of geography has been addressed by the formation of an air bridge back to the U.S. and other forward bases via airlift and aerial refueling, along with the use of logistics ships and War Readiness Materials (WRM) pre-positioned in-theater for the warfighter. Even so, the high demand

for airlift and aerial refueling make these areas that will continue to pose challenges for the EAF. The problem of operating in a foreign land and culture is still very real, and manifests itself in the form of diplomatic relations, access via ports and airfields, and the logistical challenges of deploying to forward operating locations. Communications, although no longer a problem of cables and telegraphs, is still a problem in the form of bandwidth and telecommunications systems. And finally, we continue to deploy with many of our own capabilities and equipment to make up for the lack of them in the host nation. The USAF is still addressing these same challenges today.

As can be seen from the problems identified by the Air Service in France in 1918, things have changed little with time. One major difference, however, was that World War I was the first major war in which aviation saw action in all of its modern roles. As such, there was no doctrine, policy, or list of standard operating procedures to guide these early airpower pioneers in their craft. It was a “baptism by fire” for these airmen, but eventually they mastered their craft sufficiently to bring airpower to bear on the field of battle. As such, the EAF enjoys a great advantage over the American Air Service of 1918—80 years of experience in the application of airpower.

Even though these earliest uses of airpower had to overcome huge obstacles and saw only limited application of the air arm, they do meet the criteria established earlier for expeditionary operations. While the slow response and the lack of efficiency in WWI apparently violate the criteria of speed and efficiency, this was more a result of the infancy of airpower than a failure on the part of airpower itself. By the end of the war, airpower had become a force with which to be reckoned. Otherwise, all the criteria were met.

Airpower Comes of Age - World War II

During the interwar years, the Army Air Corps flew expeditionary missions involving humanitarian and airlift operations, airdropping feed to cattle stranded in winter storms, flying goodwill missions to Latin America, and blazing an air route to Alaska.⁷ These operations mirror many of the peacetime missions of our EAF today. However, it was not until World War II (WWII) that airpower came to full maturation, and over these battlefields the U.S. learned many lessons concerning the application of airpower that are still relevant today. Again, the U.S. was caught painfully unprepared by the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941. In fact, the first heavy bombardment in the war by U.S. Army Air Corps occurred when the Eighth Air Force bombed the Ploesti oil fields in Romania on August 17, 1942—more than 8 months after Pearl Harbor.⁸ U.S. airpower continued to grow in strength throughout the duration of the war, and the lessons learned concerning the use of airpower from WWII are too numerous to mention here. Therefore, this discussion will focus on a few examples of the use of expeditionary airpower offered by U.S. experience in this war.

Perhaps the best pattern for the present day EAF from WWII was in the three Air Commando Groups established by Henry H. “Hap” Arnold, commander of the Army Air Forces. These units operated in Burma and the Philippines. Their task was to lift, supply, and support deep insertion ground forces behind Japanese lines.⁹ In operations such as OPERATION THURSDAY, they actually secured airfields deep in enemy territory and used them as staging areas for army ground troops. These forces then engaged and defeated the enemy under the cover of Allied close air support.¹⁰ Akin to

the modern-day EAF, they worked in a joint environment, and were composed of different types of aircraft, including fighters, medium bombers, transports, and gliders. Together, these air and ground forces were devastatingly effective in disrupting Japanese operations.¹¹ For instance, working in concert with Brig. Gen. Frank Merrill's Marauders, American Air Forces were able to occupy the airfield and town of Myitkyina. In doing so, they secured "a low altitude Hump crossing, provided air transport staging bases and an oil head in Burma, halfway to China ... the Japanese were disorganized, defeated and suffering from an acute shortage of supplies and no air capability."¹²

In the European Theater, the synergistic use of different aircraft before, during, and after the Normandy invasion in June 1944 was critical to the success of that operation. Heavy and medium bombers prepared the battlefield, fighters destroyed the Luftwaffe in the air, and various aircraft flew deception missions before the invasion began. Close air support was provided using fighters, fighter-bombers, medium bombers and heavy bombers during the invasion itself and during the subsequent fighting and breakout, gliders dropped paratroopers behind enemy lines, and airlift kept the war machine moving across France and Germany.¹³ Much of the success of the Normandy operation can be attributed to the use of various aerial platforms performing different roles in concert with one another. As such, it is a model for the modern EAF, and serves as a showcase for the potential of the EAF to perform similar operations in the future.

By the end of World War II, the Army Air Corps and its Allies had become a synergistic, unified force in warfare. Applying the criteria established in Chapter 1, these operations were definitely expeditionary in nature. At the end of World War II, the Supreme Allied Commander, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower called all his senior air and

ground commanders together for a meeting. At this meeting Eisenhower “pointed out that the lessons learned in this war, especially in the best use of tactical air power, should be preserved for the guidance of future commanders, the Congress and the President, lest the knowledge gained so painfully be lost and have to be learned again at greater cost.”¹⁴ Present at this meeting was Gen. O.P. Weyland. He was the Commander of the 19th Tactical Air Command that flew air superiority, interdiction, and close air support missions over General George Patton’s Third Army during the Normandy invasion and subsequent breakout. Unfortunately, the lessons concerning the application of aerospace power would soon be forgotten with the advent of the atomic age, and the price to learn them again would be paid in Korea. It is interesting to note that some ten years later the Composite Air Strike Force (CASF) was formed under the direction of then President Dwight D. Eisenhower, with General O. P. Weyland acting as the commanding officer of Tactical Air Command, who had heard then Gen. Eisenhower’s prophetic words at the close of WWII.¹⁵

The Korean War and the Composite Air Strike Force

The period between WWII and Korea marked a period of bitter inter-service bickering over roles and missions regarding the use of airpower, largely due to the fledgling USAF created in 1947. This period was marked by uncertainty due to the advent of atomic weapons. Jeffrey Grey states:

“Korea was a fortunate conflict for the U.S. armed forces. It demonstrated the continuing utility of conventional forces at a time when the Secretary of Defense, Louis A. Johnson, had started reducing the forces’ capabilities because they did not, in his view, match the projected combat needs of the United States in a climate in which the possession of atomic weapons rendered traditional armed forces ‘obsolete’. It achieved

this by ensuring that all the armed forces would expand considerably to meet the Cold War challenge posed by hot war in a peripheral region.”¹⁶

During World War II, the Army Air Forces had a tremendous amount of experience in using airpower successfully in a tactical role. However, “so strong was the pull of nuclear weapons, along with the inclination to return to comforting theories of prewar air power prophets, that almost immediately the new service’s leadership shunned the tactical missions that had played so significant a role in World War II.”¹⁷ Due in large part to this heavy reliance on the use of airpower in a nuclear deterrence role, the USAF was slow to respond to the Korean conflict with its airpower assets. The only exception to this was the Far East Air Force already located in theater. Units from the CONUS-based Strategic Air Command did not fly combat missions over Korea until August 7, 1950—5 weeks after the decision of the United Nations and the U.S. to come to the aid of South Korea. Tactical Air Command (TAC), which would fly the preponderance of interdiction, air superiority, and close air support for the U.S. and her allies, flew its first missions on October 27, 1950—4 months after the decision to intervene!¹⁸ Overall, the lessons from the Korean War were that the U.S. could not rely solely on its nuclear arsenal, and would need a more responsive conventional war capability in order to meet the threats posed by hot wars in a cold war environment¹⁹—basically, an EAF in form and function. The initial air operations over Korea fail to meet all of the criteria established earlier for defining expeditionary operations, namely speed and efficiency. The answer to this problem would be the Composite Air Strike Force CASF.

The painfully slow response by the USAF to the Korean conflict and the reinforcement of the lessons learned in World War II led to the formation in 1955 of a

forerunner to today's EAF—the CASF.²⁰ Beginning in 1953, TAC started to develop a quick response force that could deploy on short notice to bases with minimal facilities in the event of hostilities. This force was composed of a command element, fighter, reconnaissance, tanker, airlift, and communications units. The primary mission of the CASF was to deter Communist aggression in areas like the Middle East and Latin America. Once deployed, the CASF would be able to sustain itself for a period of 30 days with minimum resupply. Under the concept of operations, the CASF could arrive in the Middle East within 16 hours of notification and be ready for combat operations within 48 hours. In the Far East, the times were 36 hours and 72 hours, respectively. The command element of the CASF, the Nineteenth Air Force, was activated in July 1955.²¹ Although they had no permanently assigned aircraft or combat units, they enjoyed a formal working relationship with the Ninth Air Force. The Nineteenth was staffed with approximately 85 military and 6 civilian personnel that prepared contingency plans for different regions of the world.²² Additionally, the Nineteenth was to provide the CASF command element at the deployed location.²³

While the Nineteenth provided planning and deployed leadership, the Ninth Air Force provided the forces to comprise one CASF and the training for those forces. For instance, deploying units in the BLUE BLADE CASF Plan, were comprised of the following: “a KB-50 refueling squadron from Langley AFB; a composite squadron from the 363rd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing; a composite communications squadron from the 8th Communications and 507th Tactical Control Groups; four weapons maintenance teams from the 2d Tactical Depot Squadron; two fighter-day squadrons from the 450th Fighter-Day Wing; three F-84F squadrons, tactical hospital, and available boom tankers from the

366th Fighter-Bomber Wing; and two B-66B squadrons from the 17th Bombardment Wing.”²⁴ While the Ninth would form one CASF, there were no plans to form subsequent CASFs if necessary.

Before its demise in 1973 due to absorption into the Vietnam conflict, the CASF had compiled a distinguished track record for halting aggression. Similar to the EAF, the CASF offered a tailored response depending on the threat. Specifically, the CASF was designed to respond at three levels: 1) show-the-flag or goodwill missions, 2) a basic combat element to serve as the initial force for a small war, and 3) additional fighter squadrons to augment the basic combat element if necessary. During its existence, the CASF sent show-the-flag forces to Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and India.²⁵ In 1958, the CASF concept underwent its most severe test, when a combat force from the Ninth Air Force was sent to Adana AB, Turkey to support Marines in Lebanon and stop a popular wave of discontent in the Middle East that had already toppled monarchies in Syria and Iraq. At the same time, another CASF was initiated within the Twelfth Air Force using plans developed earlier for the Ninth Air Force and deployed to Taiwan to stop artillery attacks of some of the outlying islands by the mainland Communist Chinese regime.²⁶ This second deployment was an excellent example of adaptive planning, where the Twelfth Air Force used plans originally developed for the Ninth Air Force as the basis for their subsequent deployment. These deployments in 1958, including the challenges they faced, will be discussed in detail in the next chapter in a comparison of the CSAF and EAF. Other missions conducted by the CASF included airlift operations in support of the troops sent to ensure integration of the state university in Oxford, Mississippi, and as the spearhead for the TAC deployment supporting the blockade of

Cuba during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.²⁷ The CASF established the legacy of a tactical Air Force prepared to fly and fight anywhere in the world in support of democracy to stop the flow of communism, a hallmark of the Cold War Air Force. It meets all of the criteria established in Chapter 1 for an expeditionary organization. It also serves as a good model with which to compare the EAF. This will be done in the next chapter.

The Vietnam War and Expeditionary Airpower

While the Vietnam War marked the end of the CASF, it did not signal the end of the expeditionary use of airpower. While the air operations over Vietnam are not the best example of the use of expeditionary airpower due to inefficiencies, the most successful air campaign of the Vietnam War, OPERATION LINEBACKER I, is a prime example of such use. In fact, it meets all the criteria defining the expeditionary use of airpower established earlier. In 1972, the United States had adopted a policy of Vietnamization, which entailed gradually reducing the American presence in Vietnam while the South Vietnamese became capable of self-defense. General Giap, the North Vietnamese Minister of Defense, launched a major three-pronged attack known as the Easter offensive across the DMZ and from staging areas within Laos and Cambodia on 30 March 1972 using elements from 20 divisions. In response, President Nixon turned to airpower, even though many of the U.S. airpower assets were already back in the United States. Ground combat units were given orders to not engage the enemy, while air assets deployed to previously abandoned airfields in-theater. As a result, the number of F-4s in-theater was increased from 185 on 30 March to 374 by 13 May. Many of these pilots

flew combat missions within 72 hours of alert in the United States. Additionally, 124 B-52s arrived at Andersen AFB, Guam, increasing the total number of B-52s in-theater to 210—more than half of SAC's total. These B-52s flew missions against the North Vietnamese in OPERATIONS FREEDOM TRAIN and FREEDOM PORCH BRAVO. On 10 May 1972, OPERATION LINEBACKER began, striking at strategic targets in North Vietnam, many of which had been off limits to attack before, including Hanoi and Haiphong Harbor. Due to this successful application of airpower during the Vietnam War, the North Vietnamese were brought to the negotiating table and the conflict nearer to resolution.²⁸

One might argue that these successful operations in Vietnam were not the result of careful planning and were performed on an ad-hoc basis, thereby negating the need for the EAF to meet similar contingencies. However, the U.S. situation now is very different from that of 1972. In 1972, the U.S. had only recently pulled the assets used in these operations out of theater. As a result, they were standing by and ready for immediate use, while the crews were familiar with operations in the area against a well-known threat. Additionally, the U.S. was still on a wartime footing, and had an abundance of assets for use in the operations. On the other hand, the EAF is designed to rapidly apply airpower assets against a threat, either well known or evolving, with limited assets and people following ten years of force reductions. Therefore, the argument that this example of the use of airpower negates the need for developing the EAF is not relevant.

A Storm of Airpower and Its Aftermath

The post Vietnam experience was one of relative quiet for the United States Air Force. While the Cold War waged on, there were no major peripheral “hot wars” for the U.S. to get involved in. However, in 1989 the Cold War came to a close, not with a resounding military victory but with the crash of sledgehammers against the concrete Berlin Wall as the Soviet Union collapsed onto itself. This left Americans shouting “Peace in Our Time,” followed by President George Bush predicting a “New World Order.” The euphoria was short-lived, however, as the brushfires around the periphery of the former Soviet Union and elsewhere began to rage. In August 1990, Saddam Hussein, the dictator in Iraq, invaded the country of Kuwait and sat poised on the border of one of our strongest allies in the region, Saudi Arabia. The U.S. began deploying sea, land, and air forces to halt the advance of Iraqi forces and restore the sovereignty of Kuwait—it was to lead to U.S. airpower’s defining moment.

The air war for OPERATION DESERT STORM, later to be called the Persian Gulf War, started on 17 January 1991. In the five-month period leading up to that date, the U.S. had deployed an air armada composed of Air Force, Navy, Marine, and Army air assets and all the forces necessary to maintain and operate them, not to mention the numerous air forces of our coalition partners. Additionally, traditional ground forces were deployed for the time when it was necessary to take Kuwait back from the Iraqis by force. What began on 17 January 1991 was an unparalleled air operation involving all of these assets. The U.S. and its coalition partners flew a total of 118,661 sorties in OPERATION DESERT STORM. Prior to that 30,423 sorties were flown in preparation during OPERATION DESERT SHIELD.²⁹

One aspect of the Gulf War that is particularly significant for the case of the EAF is often overlooked—the simplicity of flying operations flown from Turkey. While aircraft from within CENTCOM’s AOR flew a preponderance of the missions over Iraq and Kuwait, a smaller contingent from European Command (EUCOM) flew missions in the conflict in OPERATION PROVEN FORCE. The CENTCOM assets were stationed in a traditional Cold War fashion, with different types of aircraft based at different locations and separated by hundreds of miles across the entire AOR. These sorties required extensive coordination within the daily Air Tasking Order (ATO) to provide the necessary packaging of assets. While not on the same scale as operations conducted in CENTCOM, PROVEN FORCE was more akin to the EAF concept in both size and concept of operations. With regards to the EUCOM contribution to the war with Iraq, one author states:

“In contrast to the complex communications arrangements of CENTCOM forced by the physical dispersion of its air bases, PROVEN FORCE crews at Incirlik faced a much simpler task. Here, the U.S. Air Forces in Europe had set up a composite wing organization composed of attack, air defense, and support aircraft from eight different flying units; the result was that crews could plan the missions and discuss the possible outcomes face-to-face in the same room, minimizing even the need for a published ATO.”³⁰

The concept of operations for the EAF is similar to that of OPERATION PROVEN FORCE in that it bases different platforms on the same airbase. As such, the EAF would appreciate the same simplicity in operations enjoyed by those forces at Incirlik during the Gulf War. Simplicity is one of the enduring principles of war.

Again, one might argue that the Gulf War meets all the defined criteria for an expeditionary air operation, and its example eliminates the need for the EAF. However, today’s USAF is not the same air force that flew in the Gulf War. Reductions in the force

have significantly reduced USAF combat capability. Additionally, it is unlikely following the example of the Gulf War that future adversaries will provide the U.S. and her allies with five months to prepare for combat operations. Based on these facts, it is more important than ever to invest in the EAF so that the U.S. has a trained and quickly deployable force to meet evolving threats in today's world.

The legacy of the Gulf War, which ended with Saddam Hussein still in power, has been the imposition of two no-fly zones over Iraq—OPERATIONS NORTHERN WATCH and SOUTHERN WATCH. These operations require constant U.S. presence to enforce, and will continue for the foreseeable future. In the words of President Bush in a press conference immediately after the war, “You mentioned World War II—there was a definitive end to that conflict. And now we have Saddam Hussein still there—the man that wreaked this havoc upon his neighbors.”³¹ The presence of this “bad guy” in such a sensitive area of the world has forced us to remain there almost ten years later. In another hotspot, the war-torn Balkans, the U.S. has been involved in numerous operations requiring air force participation. Indeed, our National Command Authority ruled out the use of ground forces as a prelude to our latest involvement in OPERATION ALLIED FORCE in Kosovo in 1999, making it strictly an airpower campaign. On top of these situations, U.S. airpower has been involved with a multitude of HUMROs and NEOs since the end of the Cold War. While the list of USAF operations and deployments since the Gulf War are too numerous to mention here and are outside the scope of this analysis, Figure 2 below gives an idea to the extent of USAF global engagement in 1999 alone. This tremendous level of effort on the part of the Air Force was one of the primary considerations for transitioning to the EAF. So will the EAF fit the bill? One way to

determine the future effectiveness of the EAF is to examine the success of its Cold War predecessor, the Composite Air Strike Force, which will be done in the next chapter.

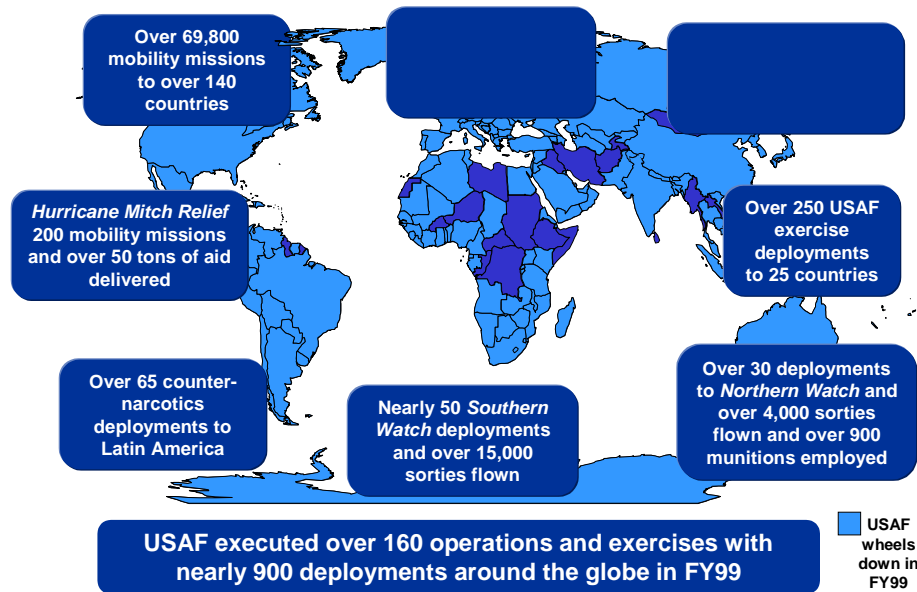


Figure 2 – USAF Global Engagement in 1999. Source: EAF Master Briefing, HQ USAF/XOP, 14 Mar 00.

Notes

¹ Davis, Richard G. *Immediate Reach, Immediate Power: The Air Expeditionary Force and American Power Projection in the Post Cold War Era*. Air Force History and Museums Program, Washington, 1998, pg. 10.

² Ibid, pg. 11.

³ Briefing. Air Command and Staff College. Operations Forces 550, “Agile Combat Support,” Mr. Ron Orr, USAF/IL, 2 Feb 00.

⁴ Davis, pg. 11.

⁵ Toulmin, H.A., Jr., *Air Service, American Expeditionary Force 1918*, New York, D. Van Nostrand Company, 1927, pg. v. (Note: Emphasis added.)

⁶ Ibid, pg. 21.

⁷ Davis, pg. 11.

⁸ Ibid, pg. 12.

⁹ Ibid, pg. 12

Notes

- ¹⁰ Haugland, Vern, *The AAF Against Japan*, New York, Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1948, pp. 275-285.
- ¹¹ Davis, pg. 12.
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- ¹⁴ Richards, Leverett G., *TAC: The Story of the Tactical Air Command*, New York, The John Day Company, 1961, pg. 26.
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- ¹⁸ Davis, pg. 13.
- ¹⁹ History. Ninth Air Force, 1 January – 30 June 1957, pg 49.
- ²⁰ Davis, pg. 14.
- ²¹ History. Ninth Air Force, 1 January – 30 June 1957, pg. 51.
- ²² Davis, pg. 14.
- ²³ History. Ninth Air Force, 1 January – 30 June 1957, pg. 55.
- ²⁴ Ibid, pp. 54-55.
- ²⁵ Davis, pp. 13-17.
- ²⁶ Ibid, pg. 15.
- ²⁷ Ibid, pg. 16.
- ²⁸ Clodfelter, Mark, *The Limits of Airpower: The American Bombing of North Vietnam*, New York, The Free Press, 1998, pp. 152-158. Note: The entire paragraph was paraphrased from Clodfelter's account, including the numbers of aircraft in-theater.
- ²⁹ Keaney, Thomas A. and Eliot A. Cohen, *Revolution in Warfare? Air Power in the Persian Gulf*, Annapolis, MD, Naval Institute Press, pp. 254, 261.
- ³⁰ Ibid, 143.
- ³¹ Gordon, Michael R. and Trainor, Bernard E., *The General's War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf*, Little, Brown and Company, 1995, pg. 433.

Part 4

Comparing the CASF to the EAF

If shooting has broken out, even a handful of friendly fighters can turn the tide if they get there fast enough, before the aggressor can get set. A fighter squadron in time is worth an air force, plus an army, a navy and a marine corps too late. A task force in two days is worth more than four or five wings in two months.

— General O.P. Weyland, Commander of TAC, 1958¹

CASF Deployments in 1958

As mentioned earlier, perhaps the example of airpower that best mirrors the modern-day EAF concept is that of the CASF. This Cold War forerunner of the EAF existed for global engagement of adversaries across the spectrum of conflict to include nuclear war. As stated in the history of the Ninth Air Force in 1957, “Korea was a test of the United States force structure, and, while the need for a tailored force to operate in situations of less than total war had been foreseen previously, the Korean conflict emphasized its need ... With the atomic bomb and air refueling, the Tactical Air command was ready to develop its CASF as a flexible, mobile force capable of decisive air action.”² In order to better understand the CASF, first an analysis of its employment to meet the Lebanon and Taiwan crises of 1958 will be examined. Following this, a comparison will be made

between the CASF and the modern-day EAF, to include the relative advantages of one over the other.

On July 15, 1958, Gen. O.P. Weyland, commanding officer of TAC, got the call from Gen. Thomas D. White, USAF Chief of Staff—"Trouble in the Middle East. Get there, fast."³ The trouble Gen. White was alluding to was the United Arab Republic, which had already toppled pro-Western regimes in Syria and Iraq. Next on their agenda was Lebanon. This was the opportunity to exercise the CASF, first envisioned in 1953 and standing ready to stop the flow of Communism.⁴ Within three hours, the first B-57s took off, and within another three hours the first F-100s left Myrtle AFB, South Carolina for Turkey, and were taxiing to the alert ramps at Adana AB within thirteen hours after receiving the alert.⁵ Forty-eight hours after the order was given, 95 percent of the CASF was in-place and ready for operations—"two squadrons of F-100s, a squadron of B-57s, a reconnaissance squadron, three troop carrier squadrons, a tactical control system and a command headquarters—100 aircraft, 1,400 people, and 1,662,000 pounds of equipment."⁶ The deployment of the CASF to support the government in Lebanon was successful, and stopped the spread of the anti-Western United Arab League.

A short two weeks of the deployment to Turkey, the situation in the Formosa Straits (Taiwan) began to heat up. Here the Communists on Mainland China were building up forces in an effort to take the small Nationalist Chinese islands of Quemoy and Matsu. The Communists began shelling the islands with artillery on 23 Aug 1958. TAC had anticipated this move, and had placed the responsibility of fielding another CASF in the hands of the Twelfth Air Force. Using plans developed for this reason by the staff at the Nineteenth Air Force, the Twelfth began to prepare for deployment. On 29 Aug 1958 the

alert was given, and a second CASF began to deploy. In this case, the CASF had to deal with the expansive distances of the Pacific Ocean, as well as a typhoon that delayed the deployment by two days.⁷ Even so, the first aircraft arrived in-theater only 96 hours after the alert order.⁸ Again, the CASF halted the aggression and successfully met U.S. national objectives. In Taiwan, the CASF also conducted training exercises with the Chinese National Air Force, bolstering the ability of the Chinese Nationals to defend themselves against the Communists.⁹

The deployments to Turkey and Taiwan each lasted for approximately 100 days.¹⁰ While these deployments were to different parts of the world, they encountered many of the same problems. For instance, night refueling had just been introduced operationally, and many of the pilots were not night qualified. Those pilots that were had limited experience.¹¹ As a result, some of the initial aircraft to take off for Turkey never made it to the first tanker rendezvous, and one of the pilots was forced to return to land and eject while others diverted to other airfields. Additionally, several made unscheduled landings at the Azores. Once in-theater in Turkey, crews literally slept under the wings of their aircraft, suffering mid-day temperatures in excess of 136 degrees Fahrenheit on the runway and 110 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade.¹² However, despite these problems, the CASF deployments achieved their objectives. When asked in an interview whether or not the CASF worked out in its first deployment to Lebanon, Maj. Gen. John D. Stevenson, who worked on the planning staff for the CASF at the time of the deployments, stated, "Well, I think all you have to do is to look at the record; as Harry Truman would say, 'Nothing succeeds like success.' The CASF was deployed, the

situation ... was kept within limits, and we did prevent an expansion of a conflict in a very, very sensitive part of the world. I think it proved itself very well at that time.”¹³

The EAF vs. the CASF

The two successful deployments by the CASF in 1958 could be used to predict the future success of the EAF. However, before that statement can be made, the deployment of a CASF in 1958 and the deployment of an ASETF in 2000 must be compared, contrasted, and analyzed. This analysis follows, to include a comparison of the similarities and differences between the CASF and EAF and a discussion of the relative advantages of one entity over the other.

Perhaps the first argument against an equal comparison of a CASF and an EAF is that of the global political environment. While the CASF took place in the bipolar Cold War, the EAF operates today in the multipolar post Cold War environment. During the Cold War, the U.S. had a well-defined mission—to secure the world for democracy and stop the spread of Communism. The U.S. Armed Forces were postured to meet this threat. In today’s world, the lines are not as clear and the issues are not as black and white. Further complicating this issue is the drawdown of forces and the reduction of forward basing as a result of the lack of a clear threat. The USAF has suffered a one-third reduction in personnel from the Cold War peak. In response to today’s security environment, these personnel have deployed 4 times as often as their Cold War counterparts in the past 10 years.¹⁴ To complicate matters, USAF overseas CONUS bases have been reduced from 51 to 16.¹⁵ Figures 2 & 3 shows the reduction in forward overseas basing from the Cold War.¹⁶

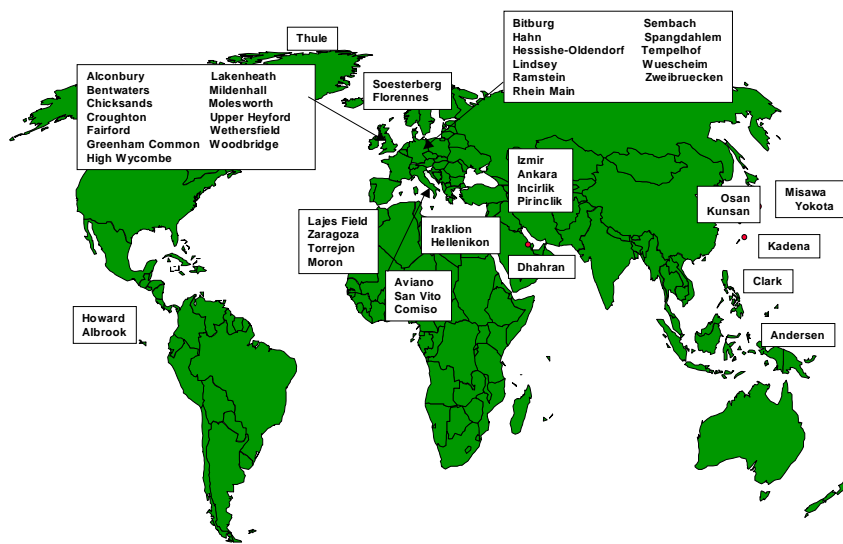


Figure 3 – Cold War USAF Overseas Bases (51). Source: EAF Master Briefing, HQ USAF/XOP, 14 Mar 00.

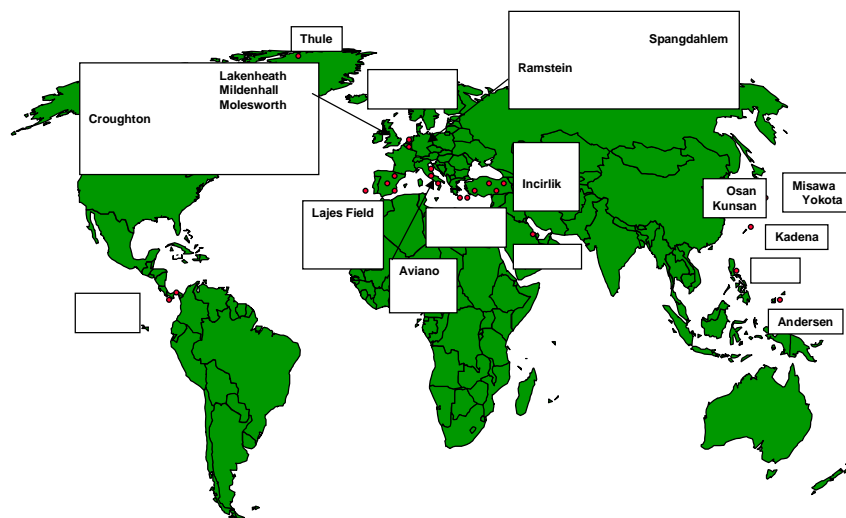


Figure 4 – Current USAF Overseas Bases (16). Source: EAF Master Briefing, HQ USAF/XOP, 14 Mar 00.

Another issue related to the lack of overseas basing is one of supporting infrastructure at forward operating locations in foreign countries and gaining access to them. Under the concept of the EAF, the USAF must be prepared to deploy anywhere in the world at a moment's notice. Many would point to the Gulf War as a success story of American air- and sealift. However, it is too easy to look at the Gulf War as the pattern for success in the future. With regards to this conflict, few would argue with the point made by Thomas Keaney and Eliot Cohen, who state, "never has an expeditionary force deployed to a region so well endowed with air and seaports, first-class roads, and a wealthy local economy to provide various support services."¹⁷ Other tangible support came in the form of host-supplied fuel, prepositioned munitions and equipment, and existing infrastructure and bases.¹⁸ While present in the Gulf region, this same type of support and access may not be available in the next trouble spot in the world. On this same issue former Air Force Vice Chief of Staff General Ralph E. Eberhart said, "We must build new relationships, nourish our friendships, build trust and instill confidence through formal and informal agreements with other nations to ensure continued access."¹⁹ The access to bases and the ability to re-supply via air, land, and sea are major limiting factors for future EAFs.

With the changing security environment and the ensuing reduction in personnel, aircraft, and forward basing, it would appear that the world situation has changed too drastically to allow a comparison of the CASF and the EAF. Even so, while the façade of the world stage and the characters have changed somewhat, the plot remains the same in many ways. With reference to the Cold War, Dr. Robert Pfaltzgraff, Jr. states,

"In this international system of superpower deterrence at the strategic level, the air assets of the United States were utilized in a broad range of other situations

in which deterrence clearly had broken down. Beneath the stability of strategic deterrence in the bipolar structure of the generations after World War II, there were numerous conflicts of varying intensity levels to which American military power in all but its strategic nuclear dimension was committed.

To a large extent, the dominant features of the emerging security environment bear considerable similarity to a familiar past. On a continuing basis, the United States has found it necessary to project military power into distant conflict zones in support of vital interests. Such a need, as was demonstrated by Operation Desert Storm, remains a likely prospect.”²⁰

The bottom line is that while the loss of the Cold War threat has reduced the number of Air Force personnel and overseas bases, the mission of the post-Cold War EAF is much the same as before, to protect U.S. interests overseas in less than nuclear war. In this regard, the CASF and the EAF are very much alike, and a comparison of these two entities, particularly focusing on the limited deployments to Turkey and Taiwan in 1958, is valid for the purpose of this paper.

Perhaps one of the greatest advantages of the CASF over the EAF has to do with the different culture of the two Air Forces and the certainty of the threat during the Cold War. Compare a statement of one of the pilots who flew during the Middle East operation in 1958 versus a statement in the EAF Roadmap. The pilot, commenting on the willingness of pilots who were not proficient at night refueling to fly regardless of that fact said, “We really decided this was for keeps.”²¹ However, it took several years to develop this expeditionary culture within the CASF through various exercises and deployments. With regards to the EAF, the USAF Chief of Staff Gen. Michael Ryan has stated, “We must focus our efforts on developing the process, the structure, the procedures, and most importantly the *mindset* to be expeditionary.”²² Likewise, the EAF Roadmap states, “The current vision (*Global Engagement: A Vision for the 21st Century*

Air Force) has the EAF bumper stickers ... but the unified theme and ethos are missing.”²³ While portions of the USAF has been engaged globally, and indeed already have this expeditionary mindset, the remainder of the Air Force continues to work toward that goal. It will only come with time.

In addition to the advantage of having already established an expeditionary culture, the CASF enjoyed the benefit of having access to more overseas forward bases for staging equipment and supplies, and also for providing personnel, equipment, and aircraft, if necessary. The CASF had access to 51 overseas bases at the height of the Cold War, while the EAF has access to only 16 overseas bases.²⁴ According to Richards, “With each new exercise the CASF plan was refined. Heavy equipment such as jet engine starter units, cranes for changing engines, trucks, crew stands, and A-frames used for aircraft maintenance were shipped to jet air bases throughout the world, readily available in case of need. Jet fuel, bombs, radar and ammunition were stockpiled at strategic spots in advance.”²⁵ Unfortunately, the EAF lost a portion of this capability as overseas USAF bases were closed.

While the CASF enjoyed certain advantages over the modern-day EAF, there are strong arguments that the EAF retains an overall advantage over the CASF. As explained above, the Cold War security environment does grant some advantage to the CASF. However, today’s environment benefits the EAF in other ways. While the USAF has not yet achieved the expeditionary mindset, the drawdown has forced it to include virtually all of its assets, to include the Guard and Reserves, under the umbrella of the EAF. On the other hand, the CASF was setup using only a portion of USAF assets. In fact, the Nineteenth developed the plans for employing the CASF using primarily Ninth Air Force

assets, but official taskings for the Ninth Air Force only covered the requirement for one deployed CASF. When it became necessary, a second CASF was organized using Twelfth Air Force assets on an ad-hoc basis to deal with the problems in Taiwan in 1958. The EAF, on the other hand, has built-in flexibility with on-call AEWs and backup AEFs that can be activated if necessary. Of course, this surge aspect of the EAF comes at a price in reconstitution, but it can be done. Additionally, the rotational aspect of the EAF does improve the quality of life and allow for decreased Ops and Pers Tempo for Air Force members. This was not true of the CASF, whose “endless exercises, alerts and deployments (were) conducted with such an air of realism that TAC pilots never knew, when the phone rang, whether it was the real thing or not. At first they developed ulcer symptoms ...”²⁶ Another cultural advantage in the post Cold War is that the EAF does not have the baggage that comes along with the use of nuclear weapons. During the time of the CASF, TAC had to be able to conduct both conventional and nuclear war, which included the requirements for nuclear training, certifications, qualifications, etc. The EAF does not suffer from these same distractions.

Unlike the cultural aspect, many of the advantages the EAF holds over the CASF are technological in nature. For instance, the incorporation of space-based technology gives the EAF a great advantage. The use of the Global Positioning System (GPS) today practically negates navigational problems like rendezvousing with tanker aircraft such as the KC-10. As mentioned earlier, this was one of the biggest problems that faced the CASF deployment to Turkey in 1958. Additionally, this space-based technology allows for precision in weapons delivery, which has basically redefined the principle of mass in warfare, requiring far fewer sorties and aircraft to destroy the same number of targets.

These advances began midway through the Vietnam War, and were showcased in the Gulf War and subsequent operations.²⁷ Additionally, space-based Intelligence, Surveillance, & Reconnaissance (ISR) allows the U.S. to stay better informed on world events. Satellite communications systems enable global communication on an unprecedented level, while also allowing for reach-back for many capabilities, thereby reducing the footprint of forces in-theater.

Other non-space related technological advances give today's EAF an advantage over its Cold War predecessor, the CASF. Prime examples of this are the improvements in platforms and weapons systems. The important power projection variables today are speed and lift,²⁸ and the EAF is fortunate to be able to take advantage of the unique USAF capabilities in this arena. The premier airlift platform of the CASF was the C-130 Hercules. Today's airlift force far exceeds that of the CASF, with modern transport aircraft such as the C-141, C-5, and C-17. Arguably, there are problems with these fleets that need to be addressed, but the USAF is still in a much better position now in regards to airlift than it was in 1958. Additionally, improvements in aerial refueling give the EAF the edge. USAF aircraft almost exclusively use boom delivery, versus the slower drogue delivery of CASF days. Aerial refuelers are much faster today, which increases the speed with which USAF assets can deploy to theater, and speeds the tempo in combat operations. Finally, advanced weapons systems such as AWACS, J-STARS, unmanned aerial vehicles, etc., which were not operational during the day of the CASF, are force multipliers that increase the operational effectiveness of the modern-day EAF. Unfortunately, these LD/HD assets are limited and have difficulties in meeting current mission demands; however, that topic is beyond the scope of this paper.

Notes

¹ General Weyland, quoted here, was the commander of Tactical Air Command at the inception of the CASF. He had learned his lessons about the application of air power the hard way. He was the Commander of the 19th Tactical Air Command that flew air superiority, interdiction, and close air support missions over General George Patton's Third Army during the Normandy invasion and subsequent breakout. He was also present when General Dwight D. Eisenhower called all his senior air and ground commanders together at the end of World War II. At this meeting, General Eisenhower "pointed out that the lessons learned in this war, especially in the best use of tactical air power, should be preserved for the guidance of future commanders, the Congress and the President." It is interesting to note that some ten years later the CASF was formed under the direction of then President Dwight D. Eisenhower, with General O. P. Weyland acting as the commanding officer of Tactical Air Command. As recorded in the book by Leverett G. Richards, *TAC: The Story of the Tactical Air Command*, New York, The John Day Company, 1961, pp. 19-26.

² History. Ninth Air Force, 1 January – 30 June 1957.

³ Richards, Leverett G., *TAC: The Story of the Tactical Air Command*, New York, The John Day Company, 1961, pp. 161-162.

⁴ Ibid, pg. 161.

⁵ Davis, Richard G. *Immediate Reach, Immediate Power: The Air Expeditionary Force and American Power Projection in the Post Cold War Era*. Air Force History and Museums Program, Washington, 1998, pg. 15.

⁶ Richards, pp. 164, 172.

⁷ Ibid, pg. 177.

⁸ Davis, pg. 16.

⁹ Richards, pg. 179.

¹⁰ History. TAC, 1958, Chapter 8.

¹¹ Richards, pg. 163.

¹² Ibid, pp. 165–175.

¹³ Stevenson, John D., Major General, "Historical Documentation of Major General John D. Stevenson," Maxwell AFB, AL, Historical Research Agency, September 1966.

¹⁴ Briefing. Subject: EAF Master Briefing. On-line. Internet. Available at <http://www.xo.hq.af.mil/xop>. 14 Mar 00.

¹⁵ Goodman, Glenn W., "An Expeditionary Aerospace Force," *Armed Forces Journal International*, August 1998, pg. 19.

¹⁶ Briefing. Subject: EAF Master Briefing. On-line. Internet. Available at <http://www.xo.hq.af.mil/xop>. 14 Mar 00.

¹⁷ Keaney, Thomas A. and Eliot A. Cohen, *Revolution in Warfare? Airpower in the Persian Gulf*, Annapolis, MD, Naval Institute Press, 1995, pg. 151.

¹⁸ Ibid, pg. 173.

¹⁹ *Pacific Air Forces News Services*, 6 May 1998.

²⁰ Pfaltzgraff, Robert L., Jr., "The United States as an Aerospace Power in the Emerging Security Environment," In *The Future of Air Power in the Aftermath of the Gulf War*, Edited by Richard H. Schultz, Jr. et. al., Maxwell AFB, AL, July 1992, pg 40.

²¹ Richards, pg. 163.

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²² Quotable Quotes. On-line. Internet. Available at <http://www.af.mil>.

²³ *EAF Roadmap*, HQ USAF/XOP, 28 Jun 1999.

²⁴ Goodman, Glenn W., "An Expeditionary Aerospace Force," *Armed Forces Journal International*, August 1998, pg. 19.

²⁵ Richards, pg. 33.

²⁶ Ibid, pg. 33.

²⁷ Hallion, Richard P., *Storm Over Iraq*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, 1992, pg. 21.

²⁸ Schultz, Richard H. and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., *The Future of Airpower in the Aftermath of the Gulf War*, Maxwell AFB, AL, Air University Press, 1992, pg. 92.

Part 4

Conclusion

The EAF is still evolving! It is a journey, not a destination.”

— EAF Roadmap, 28 Jun 99

The EAF journey has started. It involves a concept for meeting the challenges we face in the post Cold War world—one of increased Ops and Pers Tempo in spite of decreasing forward overseas basing and reduced personnel. It has been adopted as the way for the USAF to fight and organize in the 21st Century, and it will fit the bill. This claim is based on the precedent set by the use of expeditionary airpower throughout the course of history. Airpower must meet several criteria to be considered expeditionary. It must: 1) be an organized group undertaking a journey, 2) have a common, definitive objective, 3) be undertaken to bring forces to bear in battle or to prevent a battle or other crisis, 4) include the logistics, mobility, and the equipment necessary to operate, and 5) exercise speed and efficiency. Through two world wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, the Gulf War, and subsequent operations, airpower has been at its finest when it is used in an expeditionary fashion, particularly when it employs all of its assets in an integrated, synergistic fashion as the EAF is designed to do.

The employment of the Cold War CASF is the historical use of airpower that most closely mirrors the modern-day EAF. The CASF was successful in stemming the flow of

Communism in the Cold War, despite having to overcome many obstacles along the way. Even though the world stage has changed dramatically since the fall of the Berlin Wall, to a large extent the missions of the air forces involved have not changed. The USAF is still engaged in small-scale contingencies, but at a higher rate than ever before. Despite the loss of personnel, aircraft, and forward overseas basing, the EAF still enjoys many advantages over its Cold War predecessor. The EAF involves the Total Force, and has a built-in flexibility and surge capability. The scheduling aspect of the EAF creates stability in the force, and should help reduce Ops and Pers Tempo problems. The EAF takes advantage of improved aircraft and weapons systems operating under the umbrella of space-based technology and capabilities unknown during the days of the CASF. Based on these facts, in a direct comparison the EAF enjoys a relative advantage over the CASF. Similarly, just as the CASF was successful in its time, so the EAF will be successful in its time.

Does history support the modern-day EAF concept? The answer is a resounding “yes.” History is replete with examples of the successful expeditionary use of airpower, from the earliest days of flight to the present. However, history is also marked with the problems associated with this use—logistics, geography, maintenance, communications, etc. Many of these same problems and many new challenges still face the EAF—developing an expeditionary culture/mindset within the Total Force, integrating LD/HD assets into the ASETF package, upgrades to over-taxed airlift assets with low mission capability rates such as the C-5, force protection issues in unsecured areas, access to and infrastructure support in unforeseen trouble spots, etc. Various DoD, USAF and independent agencies such as the RAND Corporation are currently researching these

challenges, and must continue to do so. Even so, history proves that, when necessary, these challenges have been met and dealt with successfully in the past. One important aspect for the future of the EAF has been left out of this research project—people. The biggest advantage the USAF has in meeting these challenges is its people. Throughout history it has been the people that have made American airpower the fighting force it is today. These same people will be the force multiplier necessary to the success of the EAF. Brig. Gen. L. Dean Fox, the Air Mobility Command Civil Engineer, summed this intangible quality of USAF people up nicely when asked if the EAF will work when he said, “It will work because we’ll make it work.”¹ USAF people will not let the proud heritage of successful American airpower fall—they are indeed America’s greatest capability.

Notes

¹ Discussion with Brig. Gen. Dean L. Fox, HQ Air Mobility Command Civil Engineer, on 6 Mar 2000.

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